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ABSTRACT

Factors that influence college admissions and articulation are considered, based on testimony of the admissions director of Prairie View A&M University, Texas. The following concerns are addressed: the rationale behind college admissions at a small, rural four-year college serving a predominantly black student population; societal, political, and economic factors that influence and shape college admissions practices; the relationship between secondary and postsecondary institutions in the admissions process; and expectations of entering college freshmen versus the difficulties they encounter. The admissions rationale of the college is discussed with regard to the individual student pursuing undergraduate, graduate, professional, or continuing education studies. Commitments to society, knowledge building, leadership, and quality are also addressed. Attention is also directed to student characteristics that accelerate attrition and reasons why a student might leave school, including the following considerations: academic problems, the college administration, social life, financial aid, spiritual life, student activities, employment, and dormitory life. Recommendations to improve admissions are included. (SW)

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204

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND THE TRANSITION
TO POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

Since 1950 of the three million plus boys and girls who graduate from high school each year in the United States, more than half distribute themselves among 3,000 colleges, universities, junior colleges, and technical institutions. This great distribution of our Nations youth is a social process of great complexity, not fully understood by the students themselves, by their parents and advisers, or by the educators, including admissions officers who participate in it. The process, taken in its entirety, is a product of an immense number of individual choices and decisions taken by millions of people, under the influence in part of calculations and estimates projected a generation into the future and in part of beliefs, opinions, whims, ancient loyalties, and areas of ignorance scarcely amendable to rational estimate. It is important to note that most of the decisions involved occur outside college admissions offices, not in them. Access to higher education is essentially a social process deeply involved with the society's entire cultural pattern and system of values.

It is quite apparent that the numbers of students seeking the benefits of higher education is expanding and diversifying. This

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expansion and diversification of the higher education system in the United States can be attributed to a variety of factors: the increasing demands of the economy for a more highly educated labor force, the demographic effects of the post-war baby boom, increasing specialization in all aspects of American life, and the drive to promote equal educational opportunities for a greater proportion of the population, to cite the most significant.

The purpose of this paper is to present a brief discussion centered around four general areas:

- o. Prevailing rational concerning the college admissions process in a small, rural four year college serving a predominantly black college student population.
- o. Social, political, and economic factors that influence and shape college admissions practices, and the relationships between secondary and post secondary institutions in the admissions process.
- o. Expectations of entering college freshmen expect to achieve in college versus the difficulties they encounter.
- o. Recommendations to improve both the admissions process and cooperation between high schools and colleges in preparing students better for the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

Prevailing rational concerning the college admissions process in a small, rural four year college serving a predominantly black college student population.

The Admissions Department is committed to a program sedigned to carry out the mission of the university and at the same time meet the

challenge of the specific mission of the Admissions Department.

The mission of the Admissions Department includes: 1) The individual; 2) The Society; 3) Knowledge; 4) Leadership; and 5) First class quality.

1. The Individual

Undergraduate Education.

The mission of the Admissions Department is to provide an undergraduate student body who will enroll in the several undergraduate academic programs of the university and possess a set of specific capabilities.

Graduate Education. The mission of the Admissions Department is to provide graduate students of first class quality who possess a set of specific capabilities.

Professional Education. The mission of the Admissions Department is to provide students who will participate in the professional education program of the university and who will possess a set of specific capabilities.

Life-Long Learning. The mission of the Admissions Department is to foster within the local, state, regional, national, or international community the idea of live-long learning and to provide to the university community students who possess a set of specific capabilities.

The set of specific capabilities sought are:

- a. Achievement of the full realization of the optimal potential of each student in terms of educational development regardless of age or personal, social, or economic status.

- b. Achievement of the optimal development of positive thinking, positive mental attitude and reality orientation in terms of his or her profession.
- c. Achievement of the optimal and professional success in terms of advanced scholarships and professional competencies.
- d. Achievement of optimal personal/social success as related to a chosen professional field.
- e. Achievement of optimal career success in terms of preparation for entry into and upward mobility and advancement in the chosen professional field.

2. The Society

The Admissions Department is committed to contributing to the advancement of our free society and the continued progress of our civilization.

The Admissions Department relates itself in a relevant and meaningful way to its societal communities, i.e. local, state, regional, national and international in terms of understanding, interpreting, investigating, researching, rendering service, and assisting in improvements of the society in relationships to such present and impending problems as those stated in items 3-4-5 which follow.

3. Knowledge

The mission of the Admissions Department is to identify, transmit, preserve, discover, investigate and validate knowledge beneficial to its own program, which is to serve the citizens and the world in making a successful transition into the university community.

The mission includes a commitment to the following:

- a. Teaching and learning.
- b. Research, experimentation and demonstration.
- c. Knowledge storage banks of relevant information on tapes or in other depositories.
- d. The use of advanced technology in the retrieval and storage of knowledge.
- e. Graphic, visual and auditory media used for knowledge dissemination.

4. Leadership

The mission of the Admissions Department is to foster first class leaders and leadership through the quality of the students admitted, the persons employed the programs offered, the research conducted, and the services rendered.

5. First Class Quality

The mission of the Admissions Department is to foster first class quality through the persons employed, the program offered the research conducted and the services rendered.

Social, political and economic factors that influence and shape college admissions practices, and the relationship between secondary and post secondary institutions in the admissions process.

In approaching this question it is quite difficult to discuss adequately all of the many implications of the impactors of a social, political and economic nature and its ultimate effect on the type and quality of educational programs offered to the nations young through both secondary and post secondary institutions.

Impactors are of three major types: past, present and future, and they are at times hardly distinguished from each other. These impactors, of whatever type, directly affect: 1) the programs to be administered; 2) the type and number of personnel desired; 3) the type and quality of support; 4) the facilities made available as well as the nature, quality and potential of the student body.

Social Impactors

The social impactors are as follows:

- Changing employment opportunities with less emphasis on teaching and more on the technology trained individuals
- Changing philosophical beliefs about education
- The shifts in population from rural to urban from cold to warm climates and from inner city to suburban living
- Changes in the traditional family structure
- The return to educational institutions of older individuals desiring job placement and advancement
- Changes in the make-up and methods in educational institutions

Political Impactors

Political Impactors are as follows:

- Affirmative action legislation
- Creation of additional competing institutions such as 2 and 4 year colleges
- The Texas Coordinating Board
- The Texas A&M University Board

- The creation of alternative methods for obtaining job training skills other than higher education
- Various accreditation agencies
- The threat of world tension and military draft
- Judicial decisions such as the Bakke decision

Economical Impactors

Economic Impactors are as follows:

- Increased cost of higher education
- Inflation rate
- Increased dependence on financial support from outside governmental agencies
- Depletion of energy supplies
- Higher wages for qualified personnel

To add a few more societal problems:

1. Increased technological unemployment.
2. Increased impersonality between people.
3. Increased complexity of every aspect of our daily lives.
4. Increased distance between the haves and have-nots in our society.
5. Increased break down in terms of moral fiber.
6. Increased inability to communicate effectively.
7. The ever present threat of total destruction.

These prevailing conditions lead to two very distinct results:

1. Alienation
2. Loss of identity

It is apparently quite simple to identify what can happen, will happen and is happening to youngsters forced to live in an environment containing the vector forces such as those listed under social, political and economic impactors.

While those who have attempted to pin-point the effects of impactors on people have concentrated on academic handicaps, potential learning assets can also be identified.

Learning Handicaps

1. Difficulty in evaluating their own behavior and that of other persons with a tendency, therefore, to be confused about their identity, identification, and aspirations; also low-self esteem which, however, is not necessarily as detrimental to achievement as are these uncertain elements.
2. Depressed Motivation, aspiration, and achievement as a result of anticipated failure (due to limited horizons and opportunities) to attain the goals of financial success - goals they share with members of more privileged groups.
3. Limited appreciation of academic achievement and of some social norms (for example, courtesy and polite behavior which is expected of them but not usually accorded them.
4. Limited ability to concentrate on a variety or wide range of academic or other areas of interest.
5. Types of perception (such as inability to sustain attention to verbal communication) which are not conducive to academic efficiency.

6. Limited ability to use traditional abstract symbols and complex academic language.
7. Tendency to favor concrete, stimulus bound rather than abstract thinking processes.
8. Socioeconomic conditions (or their effects) which are not likely to complement traditional standards of academic development. These include: hyper mobility, family instability, substandard housing, repeated discriminatory treatment, lack of wholesome role models, and exclusion from the mainstream of society.

I have dealt with the impactors in our society and the possible effect these impactors have on those students in our secondary and post secondary institutions. Students come to us with "hang-ups" because the society is "hung up".

Where can we find positives in the situation? How can we contradict the forces which seem at this moment to have the upper hand?

I do not profess to have the answer to these questions but I am reminded of a passage in the Bible concerning Paul and Titus. Paul wrote to Titus concerning why he had been dropped from Paul's mission and stationed in Crete (Titus 1:5) "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that you shouldst set in order the things that are wanting".

As Director of Admissions of a small rural university with a population predominantly black I am certainly aware of the academic personal, social and career handicaps of our students and am happy to state that I am a member of an organization that has taken steps to do something about these handicaps.

Some of the interventions have been:

- Through formal and informal classes to cause counselors, teachers and administrators to become aware of the learning assets of young people
- Through courses such as Organization and Administration of Guidance programs to gear their progress toward meeting the academic personal, social and career needs of youth in a Democracy.
- Reorganization of the university to meet the needs of the young college student who aspires to achieve educationally.

Learning Assets

These characteristics were originally identified in Edmund Gordon's "The Relevance of Behavior Theory for Directed Learning in Children," paper read at the 1963 meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Washington, D.C.

1. Motivation, creativity, and proficiency in selected areas of interest or endeavor
2. Subtlety and skill in the verbal and non-verbal communication characteristic of their own social or peer groups.
3. Practical computational skills
4. Accurate perception and generalization concerning some social, psychological, and physical phenomena (for example, sensitivity to subtle discrimination or condensation) despite limited academic abilities.
5. Capacity for meaningful and loyal personal relationships.
6. Ability to sustain interest in selected tasks and activities.

7. Similarly, ability to remember, associate, and generalize in selected areas.
8. Resourcefulness, indeed ingeniousness, in coping with such difficult circumstances as poverty and discrimination as a result of social-class or racial status.

Expectations of entering college freshmen expect to achieve in College versus the difficulties they encounter

A review of the degree aspirations of entering college freshmen on a national, state, and local scale follows. (Data based on information available for 9/1/81)

EDUCATIONAL DEGREE ASPIRATION

<u>Degree</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
Vocational or Technical Programs	2	1	1
Two Year College	11	5	7
Bachelors	46	49	44
One or Two Years Grad. Study (MA, MBA, etc.)	17	18	15
Professional Level (PhD, MD, LLB, JD, etc.)	20	23	26
Other	4	3	7

A review of the Special Educational needs of entering college freshmen on a national, state, and local level follows. (Data based on information available for 9/1/81)

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

<u>Need</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
Educational & Vocational Decisions	43	44	53
Expressing Ideas in Writing	27	29	43
Reading Speed & Comprehension	32	34	47
Improving Study Skills	39	43	60
Personal Counseling	30	33	49
Independent Study	*	*	*
Freshman Honors Courses	*	*	27
Study in a Foreign Country	*	*	22
Participation in ROTC, NROTC, AFROTC, Etc.	*	*	21
Advanced Placement	*	*	28

*Percentages not available

COLLEGE EXTRACURRICULAR PLANS

<u>Need</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
Instrumental Music	*	*	14
Vocal Music	*	*	21
Student Government	*	*	20
Publications	*	*	31
Architecture	2	2	1
Biological Sciences	2	2	0
Business & Commerce	21	21	13
Communications	4	4	3
Computer & Inf. Sci.	4	5	9

<u>Need</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
Education	10	11	6
Engineering	8	7	28
Fine & Applied Arts	5	6	5
Foreign Languages	0	0	0
Health Professions	15	12	13
Home Economics	1	1	1
Letters (Humanities)	1	1	0
Mathematics	1	0	0
Physical Science	2	1	1
Community Service	3	3	2
Social Studies	6	7	4
Trade, Industrial, Tech.	3	1	5
General	1	1	0
Undecided	8	10	9
Debate	*	*	17
Departmental Clubs	*	*	24
Dramatics, Theater	*	*	13
Religious Organizations	*	*	28
Racial or Ethnic Organizations	*	*	20
Intramural Athletics	*	*	21
Varsity Athletics	*	*	17
Political Organizations	*	*	14
Radio - Television	*	*	41
Fraternity, Sorority, or Other Social Clubs	*	*	28
Special Interest Groups	*	*	39
Campus or Community Service	*	*	20

FINANCIAL AID

<u>Need</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
Receive Financial Aid	66	62	82
Expect to Work Would Like to Find Work	53	49	69

PLANNED MAJORS

<u>Need</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
Agriculture, Forestry, Etc.	4	4	1

EXPECTED FIRST YEAR GPA PREDICTED BY STUDENTS

<u>Need</u>	<u>National %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Local %</u>
3.5 - 4.0 (A- to A)	*	*	5
3.0 - 3.4 (B to B+)	*	*	17
2.5 - 2.9 (B- to B)	*	*	26
2.0 - 2.4 (C to B)	*	*	38
1.5 - 1.9 (C- to C)	*	*	12
1.0 - 1.4 (D to C-)	*	*	1
0.5 - 0.9 (D- to D)	*	*	1

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS WHICH ACCELERATE ATTRITION:

1. Has fixed academic/vocational goals, but limited ability.
2. Resides off campus/transportation problems.
3. Indicate early plan to marry while in college.
4. Has low high school rank.
5. Is more impulsive and self-centered.
6. Intends to seek less than terminal degree at point of entry.
7. Has part-time job more than 20 hrs per week.
8. Has great fear of failure.
9. Has marginal ability to finance education.
10. Cannot find his or her significant other on campus; the person, place or thing on campus that becomes the significant reason for being there.

REASONS WHY A STUDENT MIGHT LEAVE SCHOOL

ACADEMICS

1. Grade problems.
2. Inadequate study techniques or habits.
3. Dissatisfied with professor/instructions.
4. Attendance problems.
5. Course work not challenging.
6. Major not available.
7. Inadequate Academic Counsel
8. Found courses too difficult.
9. Not getting money's worth in class.
10. Dissatisfied with content of courses.
11. My professors did not care about me outside of the classroom.

ADMINISTRATION

1. The administrators didn't have students as top priority.
2. I don't feel able to talk with administrators about my concerns.
3. I was not treated as an individual.
4. The food in the cafeteria was worse than expected.
5. There was no opportunity to receive career/academic or personal-social counseling.
6. The admission officers' concern disappeared after my arrival.
7. The Director of Student Services was too strict.
8. The Director of Student Services was too liberal.
9. I was afraid to go to the business office for assistance.
10. Administrators were not competent in their positions.
11. The library was inadequate.
12. I came as an undeclared major and received no career counseling.
13. Secretaries were not interested in me as a person.

SOCIAL LIFE

1. Transportation problems.
2. Dissatisfied with college in general.
3. Change of residence.
4. I tried to change my image but I felt labeled.
5. Personal/family illness or injury.
6. Other personal/family reasons.
7. PVAMU didn't provide enough weekend activities.

8. Students seemed to cliquish and I couldn't fit in.
9. The smallness bothered me because everyone knew my business.
10. Social groups were too well defined.
11. Marriage became more important than finishing school.
12. There was never anyone around for me to do anything with.

FINANCIAL AID

1. Not enough money.
2. Applied but could not obtain financial aid.
3. Did not receive adequate financial aid counseling.
4. School is too expensive.
5. Financial aid counselor did not care about me.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

1. PVAMU's rules are too restrictive.
2. PVAMU's rules are too liberal.
3. Students just pretend to be christians -were hypocritical.

ACTIVITIES

1. There is too much emphasis on athletics.
2. I was not chosen to participate in the activity I had anticipated.
3. Student Council didn't do anything.
4. I did not like how my activity fee was spent.
5. Music Lecture Series weren't geared to students.
6. Planned events weren't structured with students in mind.
7. Yearbook/newspaper publication opportunities did not meet expectations.

EMPLOYMENT

1. Conflict between job and studies.
2. Accepted job and didn't need more school.
3. Found job in occupation related to course(s) completed at this university.
4. Couldn't find a job.
5. Went into military service.

DORMITORY LIFE

1. I get irritated with rumors and gossip in dorms.
2. Facilities in the dorms were inadequate for my needs.
3. My Senior Fellow did not treat me fair.
4. Those on my floor didn't treat me fairly.
5. Not enough social activities.
6. The rules did not fit my life style.

Recommendations to improve both the Admissions process and co-operation between high schools and colleges in preparing students better for the transition from secondary to post secondary education.

Recommendations

Admissions

1. Tell the truth about your university.
2. Furnish accurate and adequate literature on your institution.
3. Plan early admissions programs with high schools.
4. Hold college visitation days for school personnel and students.
5. Consider non-academic factors in admissions.
6. Provide support to school personnel in working with students.

High Schools

1. Hold college days.
2. Practice good advising skills.
3. Become familiar with educational institutions and what their emphasis might be.
4. Plan with and not for students.
5. Study the educational methods employed with the view toward increased flexibility.